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Lacan in Art Education

João Pedro Fróis
University of Lisbon, Portugal

This essay considers some uses of Jacques Lacan's theory in art education. A comparison of Freud and Lacan's writings about art identifies some concepts suggested by them that are interwoven in art education. The review focuses primarily on Lacan's work and then on its use by Jan Jagodzinski and Dennis Atkinson. Their contributions illustrate the vitality of psychoanalysis for understanding the development of the subject in the aesthetic, cognitive, and social dimensions.

Overture: Education, the Arts, and Psychoanalysis

Throughout recent decades, analyses of art education have been influenced by the theoretical constructs of developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, and neurosciences. These influences have extended to learning theories in art education, under the influence of genetic epistemology, Jean Piaget's (1896–1980) theory of cognitive development, and Lev Vygotsky's (1896–1934) sociocultural theory. The use of concepts proposed by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) or Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) by theoreticians of art education and visual culture is nearly absent in both American and European journals.¹ Most art education texts with references to Freud are associated with Victor Lowenfeld and Herbert Read and are often related to the proposals and strategies of art as therapy. Lowenfeld's and Read's descriptions stress the emotional factors manifested, for instance, when children develop self-consciousness. Both authors emphasize emotional development of individuals, enhanced and fostered by expressive artistic activities. Interpretations

associated with art education, grounded in the psychoanalytic paradigm proposed by Lacan—influential in contemporary cultural studies and education—are very recent (Melville, 1998; Rapaport, 1998; Roseboro, 2008; Žižek, 1991).

This essay examines the role of psychoanalysis in understanding artistic activity. To accomplish this, I address some of the concepts proposed by two of its major representatives in the 20th century: Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. A number of their ideas have become part of our theoretical speculations on art education and psychoanalysis. My thesis is that art education, both in general and as visual culture, continues at present to be heavily influenced by both psychological and psychoanalytic ways of thinking. Art education always goes hand in hand with learning theories, constructed discourses, and discursive practices on teaching and learning. I then address some of the questions raised by authors who currently employ psychoanalytic discourse in education and in the arts.

Freud and Lacan resorted to language to interpret the mental and emotional activity of individuals. For both authors, language is a fundamental axis and methodological tool of clinical work. Indeed, language and semantics are at the heart of the conceptual analyses of both authors. Language is also important in the context of contemporary art and art education. The influence of Freud and Lacan's work for understanding contemporary culture has gone beyond psychoanalytic circles into cultural studies and art criticism. The conceptual apparatuses presented by Freud and Lacan have enhanced critical reflection in various areas of knowledge and have been influenced by research in scientific psychology. What fascinated and intrigued Freud was the role of language as a possibility in treatment, in cure, and in understanding clinical situations, as well as in interpretation derived from the meaning of words, which may serve as symptoms. The unconscious psychological processes described by Freud were, from the beginning, subjected to the psychic dimension of language, as well as to the points of support on which this dimension is sustained through *transference*; that is, the moment when the subject communicates with the other subject. Lacan (1966) also stressed the centrality of language in its relationship with the unconscious when he said the dream has the structure of a sentence or of an enigma. The unconscious emerges, for both authors, structured as language. The value of Lacan's attention to Freudian theory rests in his desire to research the unconscious through language. Lacan's work is marked by attention to a certain type of psychic inscription, which is not an abstract or metaphysical entity, and which, at the same time, does not refer only to a biological entity or to some quantifiable psychic substratum. In both approaches, Freud's and Lacan's, we need the subject's words in order to unveil the unconscious (Dor, 1998).

In this review, I stress the use of concepts proposed by Jacques Lacan and their influence upon certain contemporary authors in art education. These con-

cepts are important for an understanding of current directions in contemporary art education, especially within the context of the post-structural paradigm. It is important to note that, as Sayers (2007) writes, the histories of modern art and psychoanalysis have always intersected each other, often agreeing with the words of Freud, who established the difference between artistic activity, painting and psychoanalysis: “Painting, he said, applies a substance, particles of colour, where there was nothing before, on the colourless canvas. Psychoanalysis is more like carving, which, he argued, takes away from the block of stone all that hides the surface of the statue contained in it” (p. 1). Art education operates in the two dimensions identified by Freud in his comparison of art creation and the method of analytic cure. On the one hand, both need specific material—that is, tools and instruments; on the other hand, the subject is involved, and her or his unique character assumes an important role in the process.

Freud Before Lacan

Freud’s analysis of the unconscious, and his consequent elaborations on the pleasure principle, sublimation, regression, and symbolism in the field of aesthetic thought, were important for several areas in the human sciences, mainly literary criticism and culture theory (Abrams, 1989; Spector, 1972). In this account, the general psychological abilities of creators, or their particular artistic abilities, thought of as sufficient to originate the creative process or the appreciation of art, can be understood only in the psychodynamics of the subject himself in the acts of art creation and perception. Psychoanalysis as a practice has as its central focus the unresolved issues related to identity and/or social relationships, so it is not surprising that some psychoanalysts have found a fascinating field of research in the analysis of artistic works, considered as records of subjects’ efforts to address their dilemmas. Thus, during the 20th and 21st centuries, psychoanalysts used Freud’s (1910/1955) essay on Leonardo da Vinci as a paradigm for understanding the individual history of an artist (Trosman, 2001). The appeal that some poets and artists feel for psychoanalysis is also due to the insights that psychoanalytic interpretations shed upon otherwise nonconscious parts of mental life, which they then use to foster their creative work. Psychoanalysts are mainly interested in the mechanisms of mediation, in the way that the psychological experience is expressed in the artworks. In the analogous field of oneiric activity, the mechanisms of condensation and displacement convey latent thoughts through representations and plastic forms, not unlike the ones we sometimes find in the plastic arts.

Freud did not write extensively on the plastic arts; his texts focus mainly on literature. He was impressed by the vibration that the qualities of some works evoked in the mind of the reader. Works like Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex*, William

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* all had a central theme, also central as a topic of psychoanalysis: the Oedipus complex. His two main works on plastic arts are *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1910) and *The Moses of Michelangelo* (1914). In the first text, Freud outlines a psychobiography of Leonardo, a meta-analysis of a narrative taken from a romanced biography of the Italian painter by Russian writer Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky, titled *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* (1901). In the second text, Freud describes a sculpture created by Michelangelo for the tomb of Pope Julius II, which impressed Freud throughout his life and which he always visited when in Rome. Freud projected and identified himself in that representation of Moses materialized by Michelangelo. For Freud, great works of art resulted from the work of exceptional individuals, individuals with extraordinary intentions and special psychological qualities (Elias, 1997).

The psychoanalysis of art, as practiced by various authors, has centered on the creative work of the artist, on the creative process, and on biography. The possibility of taking the insights achieved from psychoanalytic analysis of artistic creation to the psychology of the viewer lies in recognizing similarities in the processes underlying art perception and creation. The unconscious, involving instinctive impulses, desires, and submerged memories, is formed within the context of the psychoanalytic interpretative dynamics and, in this process, in a fusion between work (artist) and reader. According to the Danish psychologist Bjarne Funch (1997), Freud did not formulate a general theory of artistic creativity, neither in his study on Leonardo da Vinci nor in other texts. Nevertheless, his general approach to human motivation placed artistic creativity in such a perspective that it contributed to the aesthetics and psychology of art. In Funch's opinion, "Freud's view of artistic creativity is fundamental for understanding art appreciation because he believes that works of art evoke and satisfy the same unconscious impulses in the viewer as they originally did in the artist" (p. 148).

Almost all psychoanalytic theorists of art—from Carl Jung's (1875–1961) student Erich Neumann (1959/1974) to psychoanalyst and art historians Ernst Kris (1964) and Anton Ehrenzweig (1967)—stressed the role of *primary forms* in the process of art creation and expression. This psychoanalytic tendency to associate the aesthetic with primitive forms of perception started with Freud, who stressed that art experience allows primitive fantasies to escape repression, at least in part, and thus attain a symbolic satisfaction. In this line of thought, the central nucleus of art creation and perception involves a certain type of regression of the subject's personality to forms of consciousness bearing qualities considered primordial, which can assume one of many qualities: a ready access to instinctive and sensorial forms of individual experience; a primordial union between the self and the sur-

rounding world; a link between signifier and signified; and an impression of freedom regarding the rational, and daily and scientific conventionalism (Sass, 1994).

Freud's legacy was refined by the contributions of the psychoanalysts who came after him. Aesthetic theories of classical psychoanalytic orientation placed the greatest emphasis on the role of the pleasure principle and on the symbolic satisfaction of primitive instincts, as well as on the gratification that the process of art creation and fruition brought to individuals. For example, for Ernst Kris (1964) the regression of the ego and its primitivization, with a consequent approximation to the *id*, were a sine qua non condition for any aesthetic experience, whereas for Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) artistic creativity was close to the chaos inherent in the primary process. For Ernst Schachtel (1959), in turn, the curiosity of artists and liberation from conventional forms of perception converged with the attitudes of small children. Even while stressing the importance of the instinctive, the spontaneous, and the primitive, classical psychoanalytic aesthetic theory recognizes that the creation of a work of art, just as in oneiric activity, must include a secondary elaboration; that is, a rationalization process at the subject's service: "[T]he notion that ego processes serve primarily to disguise or sugar-coat an instinctual core has been itself repeatedly attacked by postclassical analysts who wish to give the ego a more central and essential place" (Sass, 1994, p. 34).

Freud explained art creation by reference primarily to the concept of *sublimation*, a process in which the sexual libido is redirected towards nonsexual aims. In support of his theory, Freud wrote a series of texts analyzing literary works that, according to him, could be useful for psychoanalysis. There were two major reasons for its usefulness. The first was that the literary text, and works of art in general, express *truths* about the psyche in a poetic form, which implies that writers can directly sense the "truths" that psychoanalysis later reveals through more laborious means. The second was that a psychoanalytic reading, closer to the literary text, could reveal some elements of the author's psyche. In fact, Freud makes the work of art and artistic activity a screen on which childhood conflicts are projected. It is precisely through the sublimation process that those conflicts are appeased.

Lacan After Freud

Like Freud, Lacan had a great impact on theories of literature and the visual arts. Lacan's writings influenced the way in which contemporary critics conceptualize the arts of the text, especially of the film image and film studies. Although many aspects of Lacanian theory relate directly or indirectly to aesthetic issues, we do not find in Lacan a general aesthetic theory but rather a diverse set of analytic con-

cepts relevant to problems of aesthetic experience. Lacan proposed new readings and rereadings of some literary texts as a kind of enlarged metaphor for psychoanalytic theory (Rapaport, 1998).

Lacan's psychoanalytic approach has been important in the field of cultural studies and in the concomitant lapidary evocation of fundamental references to structuralism, Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics, and Hegel's philosophy. The structuralist reference permanently underlies Lacan's theoretical elaborations. Many scholars of culture, who wish to use psychological theories and concepts in their analyses, turn today primarily to Lacan's work, in, for instance, so-called psychoanalytic literary criticism.² In many areas of the social sciences, the applied psychology is Freud's via Lacan's. In Lacan's work, allusions to works of art are frequent, especially to literary works of different genres: prose, drama, and poetry.³ However, he also discussed the visual arts, as at his 1964 seminar dedicated to anamorphic art, where Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* is analyzed. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the ways in which Freud and Lacan analyze works of art. Although Lacan speaks of sublimation, he does not believe, unlike Freud, that it is possible or desirable for psychoanalysis to say anything about the artist's psychology. This exclusion of the artist from the discussion of works of art, this critical flight from the psychobiographical method often used by Freud, means that the analysis of works should not be centered on the reconstruction of the intentions of the author or creator. The key concern in Lacan's method is not the artist's intention; rather, it is the reading and analysis of the links in artistic discourse. These links serve as metaphors to illustrate some of Lacan's most important ideas.

When analyzing Holbein's painting, Lacan breaks with the traditional analysis of the psychology and philosophy of reception, which has persisted in both art history and art education. He says that the essence of the relationship between the being and its appearance is elsewhere.⁴ Like other postmodern theorizers, Lacan underlines the fragmentary and heterogeneous nature of reality and denies to human thought the ability to give an objective account of that reality. There are no fixed identities. He even says that no type of subject autonomy or self-determination is possible. Identity, for Lacan, is always defined by external elements. Along this line of thought, Lacan speaks of the constant sliding of the signifier under the signified and, like Jacques Derrida (1967), believes in a system of pure and simple fluctuating meanings, without relationship with extralinguistic referents. The idea of stable signs is criticized, and the interaction between reader and text as a form of productivity is emphasized.

Lacan's approach to works of art functions as an illustration of analytic interpretation and is, at the same time, a good example of the psychoanalytic concepts proposed: "[B]oth aspects of Lacan's approach . . . are concerned not

with saying something about the texts themselves, but merely with using the texts to say something about psychoanalysis. This is perhaps the most important difference between Lacan's approach to works of art and Freud's" (Evans, 2006, p. 14). The elaborations Lacan presents on literary texts are not exercises in literary criticism but representations built to give the audience an idea of how the unconscious can be read. This discourse should then be dealt with as a text and, to underline this, Dylan Evans notes, "Just because the most fundamental complex (Oedipus) in psychoanalytic theory is taken from a literary work, Lacan says, does not mean that psychoanalysis has anything to say about Sophocles" (p. 13). As can be inferred, Lacan's method is similar to that used by formalists and structuralists, where the signified is dispensed with in favor of the signifier, and the content is isolated (placed within brackets) in relation to formal structures (Evans, 2006).

Intermezzo: Aisthetics or Aesthetics?

In this section, I discuss some of the readings based on the Lacanian paradigm within the context of art education and visual culture. First of all, it must be said that few authors in art education have returned to the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis, and the most significant contributions have come from the elaborations proposed by Jan Jagodzinski (2004, 2010), Dennis Atkinson (1999, 2001, 2002), and Sidney Walker and colleagues⁵ (Walker, 2006; Walker, Daiello, Hathaway, & Mindi, 2009).⁶ The essays produced by these scholars are a process of clinical observation centered on creation and on the critical perception of the artwork's reality.

Thinking the educational implications of the model of psychoanalysis is very complex because psychoanalysis almost always articulates its conceptual apparatus within clinical practice and not within the educational milieu (they are of different natures but intersect each other). Freud assumed on several occasions a critical attitude towards education; he argued that education, by repressing sexuality, castrated individual freedom. In psychoanalysis, the unconscious is the primordial place for the elaboration of personal knowledge, which the subject himself or herself does not control. In the education field, we are confronted with types of information defined from the start—the result of the direct action of consciousness. However, it was the renewed interest of psychoanalysis in the word, in speech, that led Lacan to Freud in what Lacan himself called a return to Freud. Lacan invites us from the very beginning to return to the principle on which Freud founded psychoanalysis, the starting point neglected by those who sought to cure the other's ego through the image and resemblance of their own ego. This principle guided the life of the French psychoanalyst, structured over more than 30 years of his teaching and materialized in his *Seminars* (1950–1981). The *Seminars*

mainly addressed the four big dimensions—the Imaginary, the Symbolic, the Real, and the Symptom. As Shoshana Felman (1983), an author affiliated with cultural theory, wrote, “Pedagogy in psychoanalysis is thus not just a theme: it is a rhetoric. It is not just a statement: it is an utterance. It is not just a meaning: it is action, an action which itself may very well at times, belie stated meaning, the didactic *thesis*, the theoretical assertions” (p. 26).

Let us then look at the contribution of two of the authors who have most used concepts advanced by Lacan—though I will not engage in an exhaustive analysis of their contributions. One contemporary writer on art education who uses the Lacanian theoretical structure in a radical way is Jan Jagodzinski (2004, 2010). Jagodzinski has centered his attention on the importance of subjectivity in education, referring to some Lacanian and post-Lacanian paradigmatic concepts, as do Slavoj Žižek and Joan Copjec, “who dwell on the psychic register of the Real,” and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whom Jagodzinski uses “as sources of a renewed way to escape representation and identity.”⁷ In *Youth Fantasies: The Perverse Landscape of the Media* (2004), Jagodzinski presents an analysis of the relationship of youth with the new media, extendable to a generalized way of social being. In his words, if we wish to better understand “youth fantasies,” we should frame them within a context of de-Oedipalization or post-Oedipalization, as a loss of trust in authority (in the etymological sense) that is currently under way. This situation is marked by a change from a culture of desire to a culture dominated by drive. Jagodzinski sees Western culture as being dominated by neoliberal values supported by what he calls *designer capitalism* and what other authors, such as Gilles Deleuze, call the *controlling and controlled society*. For Jagodzinski, educators are currently confronted by a learning, hypernarcissistic subject, of whom demands of various degrees of complexity are made, in a hyperaestheticized society, controlling individuals’ desires and aspirations, where the maxim of “learning to learn,” of training the subject to deal with the information society, has become the most widespread form of school learning. Being prepared for market needs is the most important concern for “education designers.” This idea has deeply penetrated Western and industrialized societies.

Jagodzinski (2010) questions what should happen today in art and its teaching, in the context of the globalized, digitalized information society. At school, arts teachers continue working in the face of the perceived nonessentiality of their teaching field. Jagodzinski addresses this perception through his discourse on the instrumentalization of the arts, through such concepts as “space aestheticization” that the arts generally play in Western schools. This question is not really recent and is linked to the very history of school subjects. On the other hand, the presence of the arts in school continues today as the teaching of visual language, and aesthetics is often reduced to reading the elements of form and to contact with

masterpieces and the great narratives of art history, often through a formal analysis. For Jagodzinski there is a fundamental antagonism here, made clear through the logic of Lacan's "impossible Real." This antagonism concerns the complex relationship between the arts and their teaching, as art mediators have, in fact, no choice. Educators should respond to the explicit demands that flood cyberspace and be producers of a different discourse from the one generally produced by the school itself. How should education in the arts act in the present society controlled by commerce, where its justification and presence in the curriculum come from its utility, where the concepts of art, creativity, and design answer the needs of a society of control and creativity is reduced to product innovation to fulfill consumers' fantasies?

Atkinson (1999, 2002), who also uses Lacanian concepts to discuss topics in art education, considers that the contemporary theories that affect the social sciences mainly describe the way that subjectivity is built within social and cultural practices and is dependent upon the discourses within those practices. This means it is important to know how we are constructed as social subjects and how we build knowledge of ourselves and others. Our educational discursive practices produce knowledge that identifies individuals according to their abilities:

Under the gaze of pedagogic discourses and practices pupil's abilities become visible, are constituted, sanctioned or corrected. Under this gaze pupils are defined as learners. . . . The key idea is that such practices and discourses construct rather than discover who we are. (pp. 107, 108)

Along this line of thought, in the article "Assessment in Educational Practice" (2001), Atkinson uses Derrida's (1967) idea of deconstruction, in addition to Lacanian ideas, and proposes how students and teachers in the visual arts organize what the author calls "pedagogised identities." Atkinson outlines a set of ideas on assessment in the arts, where he includes the ontological orientation of the individual, the student, and the teacher, all in relation to the practice of drawing.⁸ He uses Lacan's notion of the Real to introduce a change in the discourses in force—which are marked by universalist and essentialist visions on artistic abilities—underlining the difference and singularity of student plastic art productions, from the observation of drawings by secondary school students.

For Atkinson, it is important to see how discourses on assessment in visual arts elaborate students' "pedagogised identities" and to unravel the artistic artifact from the normative discourses that guide the assessment of abilities and that transform artistic products into fetishes. It is interesting to recall that the term *fetish* is of Portuguese origin, meaning fictitious, factitious, false, artificial, and later associated with the practices of sorcerers and, by nominalization, referring to the object of their cult: false idols. Assessment is only allowed to interpret students' experi-

ences within a specific discourse in which those experiences are elaborated. Atkinson is in tune with Henry Giroux's (1994) *border pedagogy*, a pedagogy concerning a relationship with ourselves and with others, where identity is not built with the other or with ourselves. Identity is instead defined in the context of the multiple literacies organized as critical and practical tools for cultural exchange. Educators should be urged to break with ideological and political prejudices, thus allowing students to place themselves beyond the world they already know, challenging their own viewpoints, and discovering other ways of understanding the society into which they are inserted, as well as others they do not know.

Another interesting aspect of Atkinson's contribution concerns the discourses conveyed through the national school curriculum that, as the author underscores, create visible and normative structures within which students must operate. The problem is that the student ceases to be present in this normative equation. If subjectivity in artistic practice is understood and shaped according to a network of discourses and practices, then the fact that these are caused by the subject's action is ignored. However, individuals and their actions need not only be understood as the result of elaborations on discourse and practice but also as manipulated discourses and practices (Atkinson, 1999). In view of this, we should ask first what is viable in most schools when daily activities and practices are organized mainly from the perspective of the hierarchical and symbolic exercise of power, as well as from the hierarchical adult-child relationship (Saarnivaara & Varto, 2005).

Lacan's work when applied to processes of identification and subjectivity in education is valuable, I believe, because it illustrates the importance of the signifier (the Other). In breaking the link between a *signifier* and a preexisting *signified*, we can begin to see how terms such as ability, teaching, learning, and assessment are signifiers that do not refer to preexisting states (though this appears to be the case) but construct the subject within specific discourses. In other words, these signifiers represent the subject for other signifiers (Atkinson, 2002, p. 134).

The value of exploring the constitution of subjectivity through a Lacanian reading invites us to examine how discourse, while producing knowledge, elaborates the construction of subjectivity more than its revelation.⁹

Finale

The discourses and practices of art education should be understood not as natural productions but as ideological productions. In this sense, the contribution of psychoanalysis to education and the arts is essential because it is based on a way of understanding human development that goes beyond the directly observable material. In doing so, it centers its attention on the individual, the producer of sense and meaning. Psychoanalysis privileges, in any of its approaches, the notion of

structure rather than that of development and, by emphasizing human singularity, it stresses differences rather than similarities. Psychoanalytic reality is not external but intrapsychic. That reality cannot be grasped in its entirety because something always escapes. As we saw, Lacan reread Freud's main concepts to argue that the revelation of the unconscious was processed as language and organized from the three levels of his psychoanalysis. He was the great questioner of assumed truths who rebelled against the notion of a definite knowledge of things. Therefore, a clear differentiation is needed between what is subjectively experienced by the subject and what can be verified in reality. There is no type of reality outside the *Symbolic order*; it is in that order that symbolization occurs, neither as subject nor as object. The debate on the binomial conscious/unconscious, which psychoanalysis has read into the artistic process, leads us again to positions previously assumed in relation to art education.

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Notes

1. See, for example, the following journals: *Studies in Art Education*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *Art Education*, and *Journal of Design and Art Education*.
2. This approach is, as Evans (2006) refers, used by Muller and Richardson (1998), Wright (1984) and, in other studies on cultural theory, represented by Davis (1983), Felman (1987), MacCannell (1986).
3. Such as the following works: *The Purloined Letter* by Edgar Allan Poe, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, *Antigone* by Sophocles, and "Booz endormi" ["Boaz Asleep"] by Victor Hugo.
4. The concept of gaze, now often used by authors of visual culture, was developed by Jacques Lacan (1979) when, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, he referred to Holbein's painting: "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear" (p. 89). In Lacan's seminars, the function of painting is presented as an area of great complexity, suggesting a debate on a dialectic between the gaze and the eye, which relativizes the work of art according to the position of the viewer. The gaze must be discovered in the work itself, be present in it like a trap. In this sense, the gaze has an orientation, a unity, an exhibitionist function.
5. In two recent essays, Walker proposed an approximation to artistic creation from inspiring concepts of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Walker privileges conscious and unconscious knowledge in artistic practice and draws a comparison between artistic and clinical practice. At the same time, she brings into discussion data from the neurosciences for the interpretation of the creative process of artists like Ann Hamilton, Jasper Johns, Oliver Herring, Elizabeth Murray, and Glenn Ligon.
6. In the field of education, Donyell Roseboro (2008) wrote, in *Jacques Lacan and Educa-*

tion, "I believe that Lacan's significance to education is analogous to the relationship between cultural studies and translation" (p. 43). Roseboro's contextualization of language is interesting, as well as the connection with what the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (1921–1997) says regarding education and the concomitant command of language: "He argues that reading the 'word' is necessary for reading the 'world' . . . libratory thinking will produce a corresponding libratory action" (p. 44). Language for these authors, just as it was for Lev Vygotsky (1987), is at once a result of the historical forces that gave it its form and a tool of thought that molds thought itself. Language is also an agent of liberation for the creation of individuals' consciousness and will; it is the means through which the subjects attain a certain degree of freedom, both from their own history and from their biological inheritance; what matters here is the interaction between the person and that person's own tools, in particular the symbolic tool of language. In this type of interpretation, language should not only be conceived as a system of signs, in Ferdinand Saussure's way; language is also, for Paulo Freire (1996), Henry Giroux (1994), Joe Kincheloe (2008), Lev Vygotsky (1987), and so many others, "a powerful system of tools for use—for use initially in speech but, increasingly and once inwardness is achieved, in perception, in memory, in thought and imagination, even in the exercise of will" (Bruner, 2004, p. 24).

7. See Jan Jagodzinski (2010, p. 36).
8. Another use of the Lacanian metaphor *mirror stage* was in Donna Kelly's interpretation of child art. In *Uncovering the History of Children's Drawing and Art* (2004), we find two ways of understanding children's drawings. The first she calls the *psychological mirror paradigm* and the second the *aesthetic window paradigm*. The mirror paradigm characterizes the psychological focus of children's picture-making, taken from Jacques Lacan (1966).
9. Michel Foucault, for instance, showed on several occasions how institutional discourses mold and are molded by mentalities. He studied the building of subjectivity within social formations and institutions to conclude that a lot of what we are as individuals is built into the core of the entities through which and where we move. These entities promote particular forms of the practice and discourse where understanding is organized and formatted. Individuals are revealed, to themselves and to others, through what characterizes these entities. By applying his post-structuralist analysis to other contexts, the study of power should be based on the identification of the techniques and tactics of domination, making visible the way the mechanisms of power and truth are accompanied by ideological productions that simultaneously mean "a lot more and a lot less than ideology. . . . The bourgeoisie is interested in power; not in madness, in the system of control of child sexuality, not in the phenomenon in itself" (Foucault, 1995, p. 237).

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